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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 000573

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2022

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: IT'S OFFICIAL: ERNEST KOROMA SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT  
OF SIERRA LEONE

REF: A. FREETOWN 552 B. FREETOWN 547 C. FREETOWN 542 D. FREETOWN 508 E. FREETOWN 503 F. FREETOWN 501 G. FREETOWN 493 H. FREETOWN 484 I. FREETOWN

Classified By: CDA Elizabeth Pratt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) At 1700 GMT on September 17, Ernest Bai Koroma was officially sworn in as the President of Sierra Leone at the State House in Freetown. Outgoing President Kabbah, Vice President (and unsuccessful SLPP Presidential candidate) Solomon Berewa, and Foreign Minister (and SLPP Vice Presidential running mate to Berewa) Momodu Koroma attended the event in addition to President Ernest Bai Koroma and his Vice President Samuel Samsumana. The small room was filled well beyond capacity with the diplomatic corps (including CDA and poloff), newly-elected Parliamentarians, the media, GoSL officials, and an excited crowd of APC party supporters. President Kabbah,s Private Secretary, Sheka Mansaray, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the swearing-in ceremony.

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OATH OF OFFICE AND KABBAH'S OUTGOING SPEECH  
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12. (U) After the opening statement and the delivery of prayers, Chief Justice Ade Renner-Thomas administered the oath of office to Koroma. President Koroma administered the oath of office to his Vice President, Samuel Samsumana. Outgoing President Kabbah spoke briefly and offered his congratulations to Koroma. He expressed his satisfaction in knowing that his government was leaving to the APC a more stable and functional state - one on the 'threshold of prosperity' - than the SLPP had inherited. He assured Koroma of his full support to improve Sierra Leone.

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KOROMA THANKS KEY PLAYERS AND PROMISES CONTINUED PEACE  
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13. (U) President Koroma expressed his gratitude to Kabbah and Berewa for standing next to him at the end of this long political journey. He also thanked the people of Sierra Leone for the honor of serving them and accepted the Presidency with 'humble modesty.' He commended the National Electoral Commission (NEC) for ensuring a 'free, fair, transparent, and credible' electoral process. In particular, he praised the Chair of NEC, Dr. Christiana Thorpe, for her 'commitment to the ideals of democracy.' He moved on to thank members of the international community for sparing 'no effort to deliver peace and democracy to Sierra Leone.'

14. (U) Koroma delivered a strong message of national unity and continued peace in Sierra Leone. He noted that his victory was not an APC victory but rather a victory for all Sierra Leoneans and for democracy in Sierra Leone. He encouraged all Sierra Leoneans to heal the wounds that had divided the country throughout the election and to reunite as 'one nation under God' and peacefully return to work.

15. (U) Koroma underscored that his government would have zero tolerance, for corruption and mismanagement of state resources. While recognizing the importance of the task before him, he focused on improvements to benefit all Sierra Leoneans, saying, 'for this government, failure is not an option.'

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BEREWA GRACIOUSLY CONCEDES DEFEAT  
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16. Outgoing Vice President and defeated SLPP candidate, Solomon Berewa delivered the final words at the ceremony. Berewa said he had called Koroma immediately upon the announcement of results to congratulate him on his hard-fought victory. Subsequently, he and the SLPP outgoing government members had met with APC leadership to discuss policy issues in a cordial atmosphere. Both he and Koroma have a vested interest in ,putting this country forward,, he said. He assured President Koroma of his support and pledged to provide any assistance that might be asked of him. He encouraged everyone to put politics aside to work together for a better Sierra Leone. In closing, Berewa emphasized President Koroma,s role as the President of all Sierra Leoneans, and that he was no longer justthe leader of one political party.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) The positive ceremony sent the right message for the presidential transfer of authority in Sierra Leone. Given the uncertainty surrounding the SLPP,s ill-conceived last ditch attempt to stop the vote, Berewa,s gracious and statesmanlike remarks were particularly welcome. He sent a clear instruction to Sierra Leoneans to accept the NEC's decision as final. Now is the time for governance.

18. (C) Koroma,s focus on moving ahead in national unity for the future of all Sierra Leone is very appropriate and conciliatory. However, he has a daunting challenge ahead of him and will have to manage expectations if he hopes to retain the confidence of those who so eagerly voted him into office. Sierra Leoneans are expecting significant improvements in their lives, including water, electricity,

better roads, jobs and reliable health care. These next several months will be crucial for Koroma and his new government. Koroma must work swiftly to establish confidence in his ability to create positive change in the lives of Sierra Leoneans.

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